

GENERAL ASSMBLY PACKET

GSA GA – 4:00pm on Thursday, March 26, 2015

Room H-767 (1455 de Maisonneuve)

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PROPOSED AGENDA

Adopted by the GSA Council on March 9, 2015.

0. Plenary to explain/ask questions about agenda items

1. GA business

- 1.1 Call to Order
- 1.2 Appointment of Chair and Secretary (Chair's report on procedure)
- 1.3 Approval of the Agenda
- 1.4 Approval of the past GA minutes ([LINK to Oct 23 and April 4](#))

2. Business arising

- 2.1 President's report
- 2.2 Financial Statements and GSA Budget
- 2.3 BYLAW CHANGE: Compulsory audit
- 2.4 Quebec Austerity
- 2.5 Endorsing the Students Against the Pipelines (ECO)
- 2.6 Motion recording of minority votes in council meeting
- 2.7 “Concerns about the procedures and content issues...”

3. New business

- 3.1 Advocacy Fee Ratification
- 3.2 BYLAW CHANGE: By-elections by ballot
- 3.3 BYLAW CHANGE: Member-at-large on Budget Committee

4. Other business

- 4.1 Discussion of TAsip and collective agreement

5. Adjournment

Details for “Business arising” (p. 4) and “New business” (p. 8) are below.
Followed by “Useful Links” (p. 9).

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (AND YOU)

PLEASE READ: <http://gsaconcordia.ca/governance/what-is-a-general-assembly/>

BEST PRACTICES FOR GA PARTICIPANTS

1. Arrive promptly and prepared

Read the packet. Send any questions or amendments in advance to the Chair. Show up 30mins early with a device or printed copy of the packet. Use this time before the meeting to consult and prepare for the meeting.

2. Line up at the microphone and practice self-facilitation

All motions, amendments, and debate will only be allowed at the microphone and your comments must be directed to the Chair. You may interrupt the Chair only to ask from your seat for points of information or order.

You are requested to self-facilitate, keep your comments relevant to the motion and direct your comments to the Chair. Also, if you find yourself at the microphone more than once on any issue, consider requesting to speak at the end to sum up your points thereby yielding priority on the list to other 1st time speakers.

3. Do not talk during the meeting unless called on by the Chair

If you need to consult, take the conversation outside or ask for a caucus (60 secs) or motion for a plenary (5 mins).

4. Refrain from asking questions or requesting to motivate during voting procedure

The Chair will repeat the resolution and ask for questions before the calling the vote. All points and questions should be raised before entering voting procedure.

5. Disciplinary action can be taken

Jokes, commentary, or side-conversations will not be tolerated. If any members(s) persist, they may be asked to leave. NOTE: THE GSA Council passed the following Motion ([CO-20141118-16](#)) as Amended: *Be it Further Resolved That the Graduate Students' Association shall remind every GSA GA participant of the Assembly's right, as per Robert's Rules of Order, either by a rule or by a vote, to eject any one from its place of meeting, and that "it is the duty of the chairperson to enforce the rule of order, using whatever force is necessary" to eject the party.*

6. Motions made in GA

If we are already discussing another motion that has nothing to do with yours, wait after it is dealt with. If you are not sure of the writing, ask for drafting time. Make sure that the motion written by the Secretary is what you had in mind.

SAMPLE MOTION

BIRT the GSA fund the purchase of 5000 reusable mugs GSA promotions;
BIFRT the GSA giveaway these mugs at all events for GSA members.

Amendment – Changing 5000 to 3000 reusable mugs;

Call for a seconder on the amendment, then debate/discussion/questions, followed by a vote on the amendment (For, Against, or Abstain). If approved as an amendment, we still have to vote on the entire motion as amended.

BIRT the GSA fund the purchase of 3000 reusable mugs GSA promotions;
BIFRT the GSA giveaway these mugs at all events for GSA members.

Call for any additional debate/discussion/questions or amendments, then call for a vote on the main amended motion (For, Against, or Abstain).

7. Counting the vote

Simple majority votes are 50% +1 as required in bylaw. So if 6 vote for and 6 against and 1 councillor abstains, the motion does not pass. If 7 vote for and 6 against, the motion passes.

For a supermajority or two-thirds (2/3) vote to pass, this would mean that any number of votes equal to or greater than 2/3 (67% or more) of votes would mean a pass. Conversely, any number of votes less than 67% would mean a fail. Therefore, if 8 of 13 members (61.5% of members) vote in favor, the motion fails.

Abstentions do not count in the final tally, so for example, if a vote is called and there are 8 votes for, 7 votes against, and 3 abstentions (or 8:7:3) the motions carries by a simple majority of 8 to 7, abstentions are not included. Also, if the vote result is 7:7:4, the motion fails as it did not receive a simple majority.

You can request that your vote (For, Against, or Abstention) be noted in the minutes.

BUSINESS ARISING

2.1 President's report

GSA President Remarks for General Assembly

It is hard to believe that it is already the end of the term, I hope that you all had a great term and will enjoy your well-deserved break in the coming weeks. We have already packed in a year's worth of activities and I would be remiss if I did not thank our great Council of Directors as well as our experienced and engaged staff. While I may be up here making this report you all are certainly a large part of the reason I am able to be here today sharing all of our successes with the General Assembly.

Now onto the report

1. Accreditation Campaign

The 2012-13 and 2013-14 Council of Directors moved to address several weaknesses within the GSA. These included a lack of democratic engagement opportunities for members and the organization being vulnerable as it was not technically an independent entity. Last year, in an effort to address these weaknesses, we held three successful General Assemblies and in an amazing feat this will be our 7th General Assembly in a row to reach quorum

Meanwhile, the 2013-14 Council mandated that we seek accreditation in 2014-15. I am very happy to report that the campaign was a resounding success. Close to 2,300 members cast a vote between October 14-27 and the result was a resounding:

Yes for GSA Independence

This represents a tremendous vote of confidence in the work the GSA is doing both today and over the past few years. From taking a leading role in the student strike in 2011-12, defending the rights of International students in 2012-13 and winning major concessions for our ENCS members in 2013-14 to developing an ever-growing (and admittedly ever-learning) General Assembly culture and creating positions so that our members can turn to us for support when required, we strive everyday to be a better organization.

Independence will give us the legal authority to engage with the University and other organizations as your official voice on equal footing. It will also allow us to deepen our nascent direct democracy culture as there will no longer be the specter of anticipated clashes with the University.

Quite simply we will be able to continue the work we do in a more secure environment and we will be able to advocate more loudly on your behalf.

2. Successful Orientation

Thanks to the work of VP-Internal Rohit Patil and Services Manager Liz Colford we held another great Orientation, in fact many of the events had our highest attendance totals to date. We worked very hard to partner with many outside groups to ensure our members were exposed to the many wonderful organizations that work to improve student lives off- and on-campus.

3. Member Advocacy\Department Engagement

GSA Advocacy offers a range of services, ranging from defending students accused of Academic Code of Conduct infractions to providing advice on how to deal with a difficult supervisor. Since June, our manager has met with over 200 students to either help them directly or point them in the right direction for off-campus issues. We have also continued to build stronger relationships with the 36 faculty and department associations we work with, as evidenced by a very successful departmental meetings that was strongly attended by student leaders. We will be working steadily to improve our communications with all members in the coming months, including surveys and more outreach days.

4. Anti-Austerity

Today you will consider a motion that will again place the GSA at the forefront of a social movement that rejects austerity and promotes investment in students in Quebec. The GSA will continue working with allies in other universities to battle the looming budget cuts at Concordia and elsewhere. I strongly encourage you to get involved and help us win this important battle.

5. Future Plans

With two members joining our Executive team recently, the coming days will undoubtedly be filled with a lot of energy and first steps. I can promise that we will continue working towards being transparent and accountable. For the first time in GSA history all committee meeting minutes will be available online so members can consult them and perhaps join a committee I wish all of you a great end of term and I hope to see you at the GSA House or at one of our upcoming events.

2.2 Financial Statements and GSA Budget

Budget ([Link](#)) & Financial Statements ([Link](#))

2.3 Bylaw Change: compulsory audit

Proposal to amend ARTICLE XIII of the GSA bylaws, previously tabled motion-GA-20140404-10 – Members Petition – Moved by Alex Ocheoha

Be It Resolved that the GSA Bylaws Article XIII – 9 be amended and Article XIII – 10 be added:

ARTICLE XIII - FINANCES	
<u>Current bylaws</u>	Proposed changes
9. All G.S.A. accounts shall be <u>reviewed</u> by an external auditor annually. The external auditor shall be approved by a General Assembly as per the recommendations of the Budget Committee.	9. All G.S.A. accounts shall be <u>audited</u> by an external auditor annually. The external auditor shall be approved by a General Assembly as per the recommendations of the Budget Committee.
	10. <u>The audited financial statements shall be received by council at the end of the financial year and made available to members.</u>

JUSTIFICATION:

An audit ensures that there is more accountability and transparency. The audit will provide a review of the association’s finances and identify areas that need improvement. The credibility of the financial statements is enhanced with a written reasonable assurance from an independent source to members.

DEFINITION OF AN AUDIT

An audit is the examination of the financial statements of an organisation by an independent entity which involves performing procedures to obtain evidence on what was stated in the financial statements. An auditor gives an opinion the financial statements.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AND AUDIT AND A REVIEW

An audit provides a reasonable basis for expressing an opinion on the financial statement and provides a higher level of assurance. An audit performs certain procedures ordinarily performed during an audit such as understanding the internal control, as well as testing the accounting records through inspection, observation and confirmation.

A review does not give any opinion on the financial statements and provides limited assurance. A review does not assess the risk of fraud, test accounting records or perform other procedures ordinarily performed in an audit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT

The GSA executives are usually graduate students who may not have had any prior management experience. This makes the risks of misstatements high. The executives cannot self-review and self-certify the financial statements they produce. An audit will help reduce the risk of submitting incorrect financial statements to the government when required by law.

The council cannot audit the financial statements because they are not trained to do so. Council members may not be able to give an independent opinion on accounts because of familiarity and friendships. The GSA's staff might feel intimidated and may not give a contrary opinion.

THE COST OF PERFORMING AN ANNUAL AUDIT FOR THE GSA

An annual audit usually costs between C\$1,000 and C\$2,000 above the cost of an annual review. The annual audit of the GSA's financial statements will cost between C\$4,000-5000 or up to between C\$20,000-25000 depending on the auditor appointed.

2.4 Quebec Austerity ([here](#))

2.5 Endorsing the Students Against the Pipelines ([here](#))

2.6 Motion recording of minority votes in council meeting

Be It Resolved That minority votes are to be recorded in all council motions;

Be It Further Resolved That a roll call be considered as a point of privilege.

2.7 "Concerns about the procedures and content issues..."

You can see the full motion and other documentation [here](#).

NEW BUSINESS

3.1 Advocacy Fee Ratification

Whereas Council resolution [Motion CO-20140321-12](#) called for a referendum question concerning an increase in the GSA membership fee for Advocacy services;

Whereas after the Advocacy services referendum question appeared on the ballot without Council’s amendments indicating this is a GSA fee increase, the GSA Council made the following resolution: [Motion CO-20140523-08](#)

BIRT Council calls on the GA to vote on whether to ratify the GSA fee increase for GSA Advocacy services.

3.2 BYLAW CHANGE: By-elections by ballot

Moved by the Bylaw Committee to Council where approved by two-thirds or a super majority: see [Motion CO-20141118-15](#)

Be It Resolved that the GSA Bylaws Article XIII – 9 be amended and Article XIII – 10 be added:

ARTICLE XIV - ELECTIONS	
Current bylaws	Proposed changes
8. By-elections can be conducted by secret ballot in accordance with Sections 4 and 5 of this article and the Electoral By-Laws of the G.S.A., or through a General Assembly, during which a secret ballot can take place <u>if the members present vote for this option.</u>	8. By-elections shall be conducted by secret ballot... or through a General Assembly, during which a secret ballot shall take place, <u>unless unanimously adopted otherwise.</u>

3.3 Member-at-large on Budget Committee

ARTICLE XII – BUDGET COMMITTEE	
Current bylaws	Proposed changes
<p>2. The Budget Committee shall be composed of:</p> <p>2.1. The President – who will be chair.</p> <p>2.2. The Vice-President Internal.</p> <p>2.3. The Vice-President External.</p> <p>2.4. Four current council directors representing separate faculties and appointed by Council</p> <p>2.5. The Finance Manager shall be the secretary of the Budget Committee. The Finance Manager will have ex-officio status (non-voting member) at Budget Committee meetings.</p> <p>2.6. The secretary shall attend all open meetings of the Budget Committee.</p>	<p><u>2.7 One member-at-large elected annually by the General Assembly.</u></p>

USEFUL LINKS

GSA Bylaws ([Link](#))

Robert's Rules ([Link](#))

Companies Act of Quebec ([Link](#))